

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of the Suspension)	
)	
of the Educators Certificate of)	CONSENT ORDER OF SUSPENSION
)	
Lucinda J. Dunn-Strickland)	
)	
Certificate # 104102)	

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The South Carolina State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on July 8, 2003. On June 9, 2003, the Horry County School District (District) notified the State Department of Education (Department) of the resignation of Ms. Lucinda J. Dunn-Strickland following an investigation into allegations that she altered students's answers on tests administered to prospective four-year-old children for the child development program. On June 17, 2003, Ms. Dunn-Strickland's attorney, L. Morgan Martin, Esquire, notified the Office of General Counsel of the Department that his client was willing to resolve this matter without a hearing. The parties agreed to the suspension of Ms. Dunn-Strickland's South Carolina educators certificate # 104102 from January 1, 2003 through July 31, 2003. This suspension will be reported as required to the NASDTEC clearinghouse and all school districts in South Carolina. After considering the evidence presented by the Department, the State Board voted to accept the suspension of Ms. Dunn-Strickland's certificate as agreed to by the parties.

Ms. Dunn-Strickland has twenty-seven years of teaching experience, most of it with the Horry County School District (District). She resigned on June 2, 2003, from her position after admitting that she altered students' answers on tests administered to prospective four-year-old children for the child development program in which she taught. The screening dates for the students's admissions tests were May 27 –30, 2003. The examination procedure consists of an individual teacher testing one student at a time.

There were approximately forty-nine (49) children tested during the four-day period. District officials believe that at least seventeen (17) out of the forty-nine (49) tests were altered. The majority of changes were not uncovered on Ms. Strickland-Dunn's students' tests, but on those administered by a colleague. Some of the

changes appeared to be in Ms. Dunn-Strickland's handwriting. There were several erasure marks where answers had been changed to lower the students' test scores. Ms. Dunn-Strickland stated she was trying to lower the scores for some of the students so that they would qualify for services because she was aware of their poor home environment. In a written statement dated June 2, 2003 Ms. Dunn-Strickland admitted to changing some of the tests, but not seventeen of them.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

"The State Board of Education may, for just cause, either revoke or suspend the certificate of any person." Just cause includes: "unprofessional conduct," S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (1990); 24 S.C. Code Ann. Regulation 43-58 (1992). The State Board finds that the preponderance of the evidence presented by the Department, supports its decision to accept the proposal of the parties to suspend Ms. Dunn-Strickland's certificate. Accordingly, the Board hereby suspends Ms. Dunn-Strickland's certificate # 104102 beginning retroactively on January 1, 2003, through July 31 2003, on the terms and conditions set forth above.

South Carolina State Board of Education

/S/ Greg Killian

Greg Killian

Chair

Columbia, South Carolina

July 8, 2003

I, Lucinda J. Dunn-Strickland, SC Teaching Certificate # 104102, do hereby agree to this Order of Suspension, consisting of two pages, and understand that this Order will be presented as signed to the State Board of Education on Tuesday, July 8, 2003

7/7/03
Date

/S/ Lucinda J. Dunn-Strickland
Signature